



Going the Distance: Supporting and Retaining Mentors

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Introductions

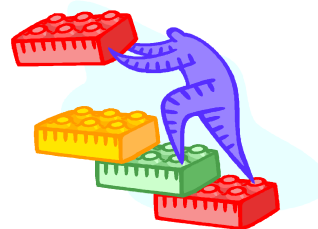
- Name
- Agency/Mentoring Program
- Role/Position
- Number of years with your program
- Community Based, Site Based or Both

Quality Program Standards

- Mentor Michigan's Quality Program Standard 7 addresses Mentor Support, Recognition and Retention. It states that mentor support and recognition are KEY ELEMENTS to mentor retention. Let's discuss the ways to support and recognize our mentors which leads to better retention.

Strong relationship = longer matches

(building blocks activity)



Foundation for a good relationship – first have to start with a good foundation between program & volunteer

- | Program Necessities | Mentor Qualities |
|--|---|
| • Appropriate youth | • Nonjudgmental |
| • Appropriate mentors | • Ability to set appropriate boundaries |
| • Thorough interviews with mentee/mentor/parents | • Trust |
| • At least 6 hours of initial training | • Commitment |
| • Ongoing training | • Being creative or being able to think outside the box |
| • Mentor Screening | • Likes being around youth |
| • Good communication | • Ability to have fun! |
| • Rules/guidelines | |

New Mentor Training Topics

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Policies/procedures | • Working with at-risk youth |
| • Communication with youth | • Location of mentoring |
| • Boundaries (physical, monetary, personal, working with family, etc.) | • Rules of program site |
| • Cultural sensitivity | • Gift giving |
| • Mandated reporters | • Improving listening skills |
| • Mental health and physical disabilities | • Instilling self-esteem |
| • Confidentiality | • Everyday stressors of youth (bullying/peer pressure/suicide) |
| | • Ways to have fun! |

What program practices influence match retention?

Program Practices for Retention

- Who you recruit as mentors and mentees matters.
- Screen for suitability, not just safety.
- Match based on needs of youth, facilitate a formal first meeting.
- Training is a must! High quality training for mentors leads to retention. Consider training for parents and mentees as well.
- Monitoring, supervision, support, and recognition begin immediately and require continuous effort.
- Evaluate your program to gauge satisfaction and success.
- Build a solid foundation of communication and trust with your volunteers.
- Do not be afraid to say no to a potential volunteer! It's easier to help direct volunteers to the right opportunity than it is to prematurely end a match.

Relationship Failure

- Half of mentoring relationships established through formal process last beyond a few months.
- Matches that end prematurely have worse outcomes than youth who are never mentored.
- More positive youth outcomes for matches who meet longer than 12 months.
- Programs must not only be able to match mentors and mentees but must also be able to sustain those matches.

Characteristics of Failed Matches

- Unfulfilled or unrealistic expectations
- Inability to bridge cultural differences
- Lack of youth focus
- Family interference
- Inconsistent match monitoring from program staff

Building Strong Relationships

Early in the match mentors can build strong relationships by:

- Learning about the youth's interests for match meetings and start brainstorming ideas for activities and projects (activities list/activity box)
- Being prepared to take the initiative to contact their mentee if they do not call (2 week rule)
- Being flexible and creative if their mentee is unsure of what activities they want to do

Strong relationship tips continued

- Participating in activities and utilizing resources provided by the program.
- Set specific goals for the match and work towards meeting those goals (volunteer together, learn Spanish, get a job).
- Establishing their own match traditions (scrapbook, journal, etc.)
- Sticking with their mentee when testing behaviors occur (trouble at school/home, skipping meetings with mentor, not returning phone calls)

Monitor, supervise and support – Know the difference

- **Monitoring** is the process of overseeing each mentor/mentee relationship, including checking in with mentors, mentees and parents, providing a framework for safety and success, and tracking problems as they arise.
- **Supervision** is the process of managing mentors, including providing guidance and coaching, setting standards and holding volunteers accountable to them, and making management decisions based first and foremost on the needs of mentee and second on the needs of volunteers and the agency.
- **Support** is the process of providing volunteers and mentees with resources, assistance, and positive reinforcement. Support involves problem-solving for each unique situation and offering care to both volunteers and young people in times of need.

Monitoring and Supervision

- Consistent scheduled meetings with staff, mentors and mentees.
- A tracking system for ongoing assessment.
- Written records.
- Input from family, community partners, and significant others.
- A process for managing grievances, praise, rematching, interpersonal problem-solving, and premature relationship closure.

Mentor Support

- Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, participants, and others.
- Ongoing training and development.
- Relevant issue discussion (age appropriate behaviors or community-wide issues).
- Networking with appropriate organizations.
- Recognition and appreciation.

How often to check in with mentors, youth, parents/guardians:

- Within the first 2 weeks of initial match
- First few months, every 2 weeks
- For the first year, monthly
- In person, on phone & through email
- MentorPro



Early indicators of a match in trouble

What problems might arise in first few months?

- Meetings not taking place
- Don't know what they should be doing with mentee
- Youth is dissatisfied with activities or not part of the process
- Either group unhappy with level of communication

6 months or longer areas of concern

- "My mentee is not making any progress"
- Expressed need for help/advice about a situation
- Mentor is overly involved with youth's family
- Skipping/rescheduling meetings
- Not turning in match documents/logs
- Not returning check in phone calls
- "What do they expect for free?"
- Mentee does not say thank you

Quick, change for me!

- Change something activity



Different ways to recognize your volunteers:

- Hand-written thank you cards
- Recognition in the agency newsletter
- Birthday/holiday card
- Formal recognition ceremony (Mentor of the Year)
- Mentee art
- January is Michigan Mentoring Month
- "Thank Your Mentor Day" is in January
- National Volunteer Week in April
- Be sincere with your words, mentors will appreciate it!

Creative ways to thank your mentors

- Candle – You light up the way.
- 100 Grand candy bar – Volunteers are priceless.
- Payday candy bar – Volunteers don't receive a salary because they aren't worthless, it's because they're priceless!
- Gold Chocolate Coins – Volunteers are worth their weight in gold.
- Clock – Thanks for the time you've given our group!
- Group's logo hat – Our hats are off to you!
- Shirt – We know you'd give the shirt off your back...so here's an extra one for the next time you give your all.
- Toaster – A toast to a super volunteer! Whenever you use this toaster, remember to toast yourself.
- Plant – We grow luckier every day you're with us.
- Seeds – Volunteer's plant the seeds of success.

Questions/Comments